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## Integrating sense-of-place within new housing developments

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## **Chapter 4: Integrating sense-of-place within new housing developments: A community-based participatory research approach**

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## **<1> Introduction**

This chapter critically explores the potential of an action oriented community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to reveal ways in which communities can be resilient to the opportunities and challenges of ageing-in-place. In particular, the chapter considers the potential for using qualitative and creative methods to bring distinct viewpoints of local community stakeholders to the fore in terms of embedding aspects of place into the development of affordable housing for older adults. Community resilience refers here to the 'existence, development and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability and surprise' (Magis, 2010, p.401). This is particularly important in the context of supporting ageing-in-place where living in resilient communities can provide opportunities for civic participation, remaining active and sustaining community identity (Woolrych, 2017). Within the field of urban studies, there has been a shift towards a more transdisciplinary appreciation for community resilience, which combines the physical and psychosocial aspects of urban resilience (Coaffee, 2008). As such, the affordances of physical space play a role in supporting or constraining community resilience particularly for older adults who may rely on the immediate neighbourhood for service supports and maintaining social roles (Hildon et al, 2008). This is important both in terms of the everyday life of the community as well as responding to the challenges and opportunities of old age, as Dainty & Bosher (2008, p.357) have suggested, 'a resilient built environment should be designed, located, built, operated and maintained in a way that maximises the ability of built assets, associated support systems (physical and institutional) and the people that reside or work within the built assets' to withstand, recover from, and mitigate societal challenges.

The affordable housing redevelopment project, based in the City of Richmond, British Columbia, Canada centred on the demolition of an existing low-rise block of housing units replaced with the construction of a new housing development for older adults. For the redevelopment process, the research team were invited by the City of Richmond in British Columbia as community partners to: (i) capture sense-of-place as experienced by older people transitioning into an affordable housing development; (ii) understand the lived experiences of older adults to inform the provision and programming of effective formal and informal supports within the development; and (iii) develop practical guidelines and recommendations for supporting the place-based needs of older adults. Research conducted alongside the project presented a unique opportunity, through the application of a CBPR approach (described later), to inquire, understand and document nuanced meanings of place, identity, attachment and detachment to place from the perspective of a sample of low-income, older adults comprising a unique cultural mix (seventy percent Chinese and thirty percent European). The research spanned a three-year period and involved a collaboration between academics, older adults, city government and community organisations. Community resilience, which enabled and enhanced shared solutions between multiple stakeholder groups, was found to help older adults transition and age well in their new homes.

## **<2> Older people and 'a sense of place'**

Research has explored the, often complex and multifaceted, relationship between individuals and their immediate environment and revealed a person-place dynamic where place acts as a strong determinant of individual, social and community well-being (Devine-Wright & Lyons, 1997; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Relph, 1976; Sixsmith, 1986; Tuan, 1977; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). According to Relph, formulation of 'place is comprised of three inter-related components, each irreducible to the other – physical features or appearances, observable activities and functions and meanings or symbols' (1976, p.61). Such components are directed by our visual senses and cognitive processes. They have been argued to capture our emotions and generate meaningful linkages to place (Relph, 1976). Canter (1977) builds on Relph's phenomenological conceptualisation of place by focusing more clearly on the linkage between the three features, emphasising, from a psychology perspective, the built features and individual conceptualisations of place as well as the activities that occur there.

Alongside this understanding of place, and of particular relevance from a gerontological perspective, is the notion that as people age, the number of place experiences accumulate, and as such, various memories of home and community become important (Oswald & Wahl, 2003). Environmental studies of older adults place particular importance on sense of place, as older people depend upon close social and community ties to place, and are sensitive to immediate changes to their home and community environment (Phillips, 2012). Establishing home and community belonging are key factors in creating the most favourable environmental conditions for older adults to live out their lives (Sixsmith & Sixsmith 1991). However, a substantial number of older adults experience dislocation of place (Sixsmith et al, In press). An example of dislocation of place can occur through both voluntary and forced relocations in old age (e.g. to more institutional forms of living or moving to alternative neighbourhoods) which can be driven by urban changes including gentrification and urban renewal (Walks & Maaranen, 2008; Woolrych and Sixsmith, In press). The process of displacement can negatively impact older adults with limited financial means, casting a shadow on dominant over-positive notions of *ageing in place* (Golant, 2015; Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2008; Sixsmith et al, 2017). This problematizes the simple assumption that ageing in place is an inherently good thing and draws attention to Golant's (2015) notion of ageing in *the right* place by ensuring that the necessary supports and resources are in place. Yet, through community resilience, individuals who are displaced can regain their agency through the process of negotiating, managing and adapting to change.

## **<2> Evoking 'a sense of place' in research and service provision**

To understand sense-of-place for older adults, it is important to acknowledge that sense of place is not necessarily a stable experiential state and that sense of place can change depending on the different experiences people have in places (Williams, 2014). Accordingly, it is necessary to explore how older adults place experiences can shift and change giving rise to new and different perspectives and different experiences of place. The research team took the position that an over-reliance on traditional research techniques conducted in isolation (e.g., surveys, face-to-face interviews and focus groups) can create limitations in understanding the social and relational aspects of place since they each limit the data in specific ways. Both focus groups and

face-to-face interviews are strongly dependent on older people's confidence, comfort with being interviewed and verbal communication skills. In addition, they can overly prioritise researcher preconceptions in the pre-design of the data collection schedule as well as the way the research is conducted (Anyan, 2013). Nevertheless, interviews and focus groups can generate rich, contextual information about the topic area. Often undertaken face-to-face in a single location (e.g. home, office, community centre), these methods alone may not always generate the necessary insights from older marginalised people, such as important memories of place and/or objects of importance. Such memories may be accessible through more creative, participant-led methods, such as storytelling, photovoice and community 'walk-alongs' (Carpiano, 2009). Application of multiple research methods also enables triangulation, a process that can strengthen the depth of information gathered (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Triangulation prioritises in-depth understanding of a problem area by acquiring knowledge from different standpoints, which in turn enables the development of solutions that are holistic and multifaceted (Farmer, Robinson, Elliott, & Eyles, 2006).

Meanwhile, local community stakeholders, such as older adults and non-profit service providers, who are often invited to vocalise their knowledge during redevelopment phases, are absent from the decision-making process (Woolrych & Sixsmith, 2013). As such, a CBPR approach was selected as a guiding framework to ensure equity among partners. In this chapter, we first outline the principles of CBPR and its importance as a guiding framework for the research and redevelopment process, particularly, when determining the most effective and engaging research methods; and secondly, we demonstrate the purpose, applicability and combined use of five qualitative methods carefully selected for generating nuanced information about older adults' specific needs, desires and expectations when transitioning into new housing.

### **<1> CBPR: A Guiding Framework for Collaborative Research**

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) has become a popular approach across academic disciplines, government and non-government sectors and other philanthropic domains (Jagosh et al, 2015; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). This collaborative approach promotes the reciprocal transfer of knowledge and expertise; inclusive participation; power sharing and equity; and data ownership across all partners (Jones & Wells, 2007).

To prioritise the perspectives of older adults, CBPR was selected for our research, principally, to provide older adults with the space and platform to share their experiences. Achieving genuine involvement of local older adults as active decision-makers and knowledge experts required a conscious shift from the notion of developing urban places *for* older people to building meaningful environments *with* and *by* older people (Buffel, Phillipson, & Scharf, 2012). This approach enabled effective, collaborative dialogue between resident, professional and academic communities (Canham et al, In press; Fang et al, 2016; Sixsmith et al, 2017). Together, local researchers, community stakeholders (e.g., older adults and service providers) and professionals with a vested interest in an affordable housing redevelopment project (e.g., housing providers, service providers, developers and the municipal government) asserted community resilience through the formulation of equitable partnerships to co-create action-

oriented research (Sixsmith et al, 2017) with the shared goal of improving community health and social outcomes and knowledge production and exchange (Jagosh et al, 2015; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008).

It is important to establish, at the outset of a CBPR project, a set of priorities that emphasise the presence of older adults during the research and development process. Older people's viewpoints need to be taken into account during the research planning, development and implementation phases in order to empower them to voice their desires, needs and expectations for determining place initiatives in their community (Davitt, Lehning, Scharlach, & Greenfield, 2015). As such, a conceptual model integrating principles of CBPR (see Figure 4.1) evolved during the research to: (i) establish a process for equitable decision-making among multiple stakeholders with shared, and at times, varied aims, objectives and goals; (ii) direct the selection of interactive methods that prioritised community engagement and local knowledge; (iii) generate creative and sustainable solutions that were relevant to the needs of older adults utilising resources available from the local community.

<Figure 4.1 here>

<Figure caption = **Figure 4.1:** A conceptual framework for an inclusive, participatory redevelopment strategy for seniors transitioning into new housing.>

The conceptual model described in Figure 4.1 depicts, at a fundamental level, the shared vision of this action research: to create a healthy, sustainable living environment for low-income older adults who are transitioning into a newly developed sixteen-storey affordable housing development. This underlying vision is associated with Golant's (2015) idea of positive ageing in the right place which argues that positive ageing experiences are not solely determined by *a place* for older adults, but are dependent upon the appropriate environmental and social conditions for creating the *right place* for older adults to age well (e.g., necessary financial supports, opportunities for social participation, accessible health and social services, age-specific built features in the home, green spaces and, policies to ensure safety and security).

Accordingly, several key elements were identified in the conceptual model to ensure that research outcomes coincided with the needs of older adults. Firstly, to facilitate collaborative working and equitable partnerships, it was important that we established collective thought with the shared intent of achieving 'real-world' impact (Boger et al, 2016). This required collective team decision-making at the outset to establish the aims and objectives of the project which were based on identified shared interests and goals (e.g., creating spaces for brainstorming, discussion and debate), appreciation for diverse expertise and knowledge bases (e.g., ensuring multiple stakeholders are given a voice), and that systems were in place for joint decision-making (e.g., mechanisms for eliciting input from hard-to-reach older adults; protocols for sharing research findings; and, generating input to and from local leaders and experts). Secondly, the methods had to be grounded in participatory concepts such as community engagement, prioritisation of local knowledge and action-oriented solutions. These methods needed to be carefully selected and implemented by project investigators with sufficient training in and experience of conducting CBPR with combined expertise in urban studies and

gerontology. Thirdly, this model is based on the recognition that long-term resilience can often be achieved through building community capacity and implementing creative solutions to address complex problems. As a result, team members worked together with community partners (e.g., developer, building management, non-profit housing association and municipal government) to develop creative ideas for acquiring funding sources for activities for older tenants (e.g., hosting learning tours in the new building for international scholars and professionals) and to develop engaging community environments for older tenants (e.g., establishing a tenant-led social events committee).

In terms of analysis, all narrative (e.g., in-depth interview, storytelling) and discussion (e.g., deliberative dialogue) data were transcribed and analysed thematically via HyperResearch 3.7.2 or QSR NVivo 10 and coded and categorised using a structured framework approach (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Where possible, visual data were co-analysed with participants through discussion generated from jointly reflecting on the captured images (Pink, 2013).

Ethical approval was obtained from the Office of Research Ethics at Simon Fraser University, Canada, for which informed consent was obtained from all participants whose privacy and confidentiality were protected.

### **<1> Applying Multiple Qualitative Methods to Prioritize Marginalized Place Perspectives**

To embed CBPR principles in the research process, specific creative and qualitative methods (highlighted in Table 4.1) were selected and applied in combination, including: narrative inquiry techniques (including storytelling); photovoice; and, participatory mapping.

<Insert Table 4.1 around here>

<Table caption = **Table 4.1:** Purpose and use implications of the five qualitative methods selected for this CBPR study.>

Because the participants were of Chinese or European heritage, two researchers who were fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and English led the data collection process. This comprised of 25 in-depth interviews with older adults; 16 photo-voice sessions with older adults; 15 storytelling sessions with older adults; four deliberative dialogue workshops with building management, local service providers, members of the municipal government and members of the building development team and four participatory mapping workshops with older adults, local service providers, building management and members of the municipal government. In the following section we demonstrate how the combined application of these innovative methods enabled older adults to share their lived experiences.

### **<2> Narrative inquiry: Storytelling and in-depth interviews**

Storytelling and in-depth interviews are methods of narrative inquiry that can be used to acquire deep understandings of self and the relationships of individuals to their immediate environment (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). Place scholars (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1991) have

explored the holistic nature of 'being-in-place' by collecting narratives on how people construct their sense of self through attributing and attaching meanings to place. The storytelling method is unstructured and often led by the participant (as opposed to the researcher). It has been argued that this method can enable participants to link multiple meanings and identities associated with a particular place together (Taylor, 2003). As such, in-depth interviews were applied as a 'discovery-oriented' approach (Guion et al, 2011) in order to elucidate the tenants' experiences throughout the phases of redevelopment. Concentrating on different places where residents had lived throughout the redevelopment process helped shape the structure of storytelling sessions.

For instance, prior to the move, many of the older adults agreed with the sentiment of one participant who described having "been shuffled around here, there and everywhere". One of the main difficulties revealed by older adult participants was the relocation process. Finding a new home and all the associated tasks is challenging for most people, but can be particularly so for older adults with limited financial resources. This can lead to heightened stress, anxiety and poor mental and physical health outcomes. Due to the nature of the redevelopment process, older adult participants were required to find temporary accommodation for three years while the new building was under development. According to some older adult participants, this had an impact on their ability to establish new social networks and relationships. One individual stressed that it can be challenging to "get out into the community" and "that it takes a lot of work to make friends" so they did not "want to have to do it twice". Transient dwellings impinged on some older adult participants' ability to firmly adjust and re-establish themselves in the community where they lived during the transition period. Through interview data it was established that the notion of home is much more than just a physical space and shelter; that home is also about community faces and places. Making new friends, finding useful service locations (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies, family doctor) and establishing social support takes time and effort, which can be rewarding, yet also daunting and stressful. Temporary living spaces were considered by many participants to not be homes, but rather as transient dwellings.

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Accordingly, in place research, narratives can provide participants and researchers with the opportunity to share and acquire rich and more complex understandings of participants' experiences, creating new perspectives and knowledge (Keats, 2009). Of importance to this study was the acknowledgement that an individuals' place experiences are complicated by the interlocking or intersection of the social positions they hold and the social factors that shape their everyday lives; that is, an interweaving of multiple systems of oppression (Collins, 2000) and opportunity. How such systems are organized through interrelated domains of power and what this means for the ways in which their lives can be lived is of critical importance in understanding how and why particular places are experienced in the way they are. As such, an intersectional analysis (Hankivsky & Christoffersen, 2008) was included as a part of the study design to provide a better understanding of how experiences of oppression and opportunities across place and time are influenced by a person's position and social identity. Storytelling, a method that uses a reflexive approach, facilitates inquiry into a person's life story without having to use language that is difficult for a participant to comprehend. For instance, instead of,



'Tell me about your social position(s) in society?', we asked the participant to, 'Take us to a time and place when you were the most happy, or felt the most challenged'. This technique enabled a conversation that naturally drew out the information that we aimed to acquire. Simultaneously it offered older adults a means of sharing their stories and triggered experiences which highlighted participants' emotional ties to place and observations of their physical surroundings. Also, further ideas were generated through a two way process of storytelling involving mutual recognition of experiences and situations. In this way, the researcher exchanged stories which touched their own lives, creating a sense of reciprocity and inspiring new ideas to emerge.

Table 4.2 presents an example summary of data analysis categories from a storytelling session with one older adult participant, outlining at three different significant 'place time points' the individual's social identity, position in society, the opportunities, oppressive experiences and local place environments.

<Insert Table 4.2 around here>

<Table caption = **Table 4.2:** Example of data analysis matrix of categories through a storytelling session with an older adult participant.>

The study of narrative information in Table 4.2 revealed important aspects of combined social identities (e.g., Chinese, widower, grandparent) and positionalities (e.g., wealthy in-laws, married, poor) reflecting oppressions (e.g., cultural revolution, living in small spaces, lack of mobility) and opportunities (e.g., education, place freedom) experienced at three key time points in different places and national homes (e.g., Mainland China, Hong Kong, Canada).

In line with previous research (Caine, 2010), the application of combined narrative methods enabled, compared to single data collection methods, more comprehensive understandings of place experiences from older adults through a three-dimensional inquiry which included time, space and relationality. Narratives consisting of rich descriptions facilitated the discovery of participants' relocation experiences. The stories of older adults helped to depict the physical attributes of place and the intimacies of place over time by revealing the socio-spatial (e.g., identities, positionalities) and relational aspects, as well as, oppressions and opportunities experienced in the different communities.

## <2> Visualizing place through photovoice

Narrative data was complimented by visual imagery in order to identify the ambiguities and complexities of the intersecting social factors that impacted the everyday lives of the older adults. As our research required in-depth understandings of key place moments, photovoice was used. Photovoice is a visual method (Wang & Burris, 1997) grounded in qualitative participatory research principles used to explore personal experiences of a particular phenomenon (Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon, & Foster-Fishman, 2006), in this case personal experiences of place. This method has been used to facilitate community engagement whilst simultaneously producing powerful images that have the potential to influence policy agendas in the areas of public health, education and social work (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). This visual

technique not only provided participants with a creative activity to engage with, but also helped generate important conversation pieces.

During the photovoice sessions conducted in this research, older adults took or directed the taking of photographs to illustrate their everyday experiences. The images were used to stimulate conversations with researchers where themes and potential actions were identified. For older adult participants, photovoice provided an avenue to visually portray experiences and share and discuss personal knowledge about issues that may be difficult to express through words alone. For example, through visual imagery and personal narrative, one participant was able to describe the importance of Christianity as not only as a religion, but as a part of her everyday spiritual and social life. Figure 4.2 is of the participant's bible translated into Chinese characters.

<Figure 4.2 here>

<Figure 4.2 caption = **Figure 4.2:** Photo captured by the researcher, directed by an older adult participant presenting her bible.>

During data analysis, this photograph, paired with the participant's narrative, enabled a deeper understanding of her sense-of-place. As she showed us her bible, this participant revealed how religion and religious activities were central to her daily routine:

'Everyday I get up and cook breakfast for myself. After eating, I read bible and pray. In the afternoon I watch the Hong Kong news and then I read bible again and go to bed at 9:00pm. Tuesdays every week, I go to church for a group activity and Saturdays I attend another group activity for older adults at church.'

Through this creative process, participants were able to direct and communicate understandings of their everyday realities, and the specific meanings and significance they attached to place.

Photovoice was a particularly useful tool for this study as it empowered older people to share stories of place through creative and collaborative photo-taking, self-reflection and joint-analysis. When supplementing narratives of older adults, the photographs provided 'additional stimulus to the participant(s)' (Nowell et al, 2006, p.31) to bring up and navigate difficult conversations. The visual stimulus often presented opportunities to discuss issues that can be difficult to conceptualise. The recalling of place memories also enabled participants to become self-aware of personal resilience through the disclosure of the challenges they had overcome, especially for some Chinese migrant participants who described overcoming socio-cultural, political challenges experienced during the Cultural Revolution.

According to Baker and Wang (2006), photography is a creative outlet that enables some people to better identify and present important aspects in their lives, since it acts as a conduit for individuals to both define a phenomenon of interest and link it with the meaning it has for

them. The next example demonstrates how one older woman participant visually captured where she had her meals every day to describe another phenomenon (see Figure 4.3).

<Figure 4.3 here>

<Figure caption = **Figure 4.3:** Photo captured by the participant highlighting her kitchen table and chairs.>

As we reflected on Figure 4.3, she expressed, “Yes. I usually eat here. I have no fancy furniture, nor other pretty items.” On the surface, she was identifying the place where she had her meals. However, the underlying message conveyed was that she was poor. For this participant, it was easier to capture her social position through the image, which ultimately helped facilitate later discussions on how she had lived a humble life and her previous struggles living in China during the Cultural Revolution.

Methodologically, photo images facilitated the storytelling process and improved the rapport between the researcher and participant, which subsequently enabled a shared-analytical process. The active agency involved in choosing to photograph or choosing existing photographs often involves a process of personal in-depth thinking about why such an image represents the topic area and so represents a representational resource which is simultaneously and generative of new insights. Data co-creation in this context involves a rich personal analytical process which is then further transformed into a more social analytical framework in the development of and the sharing of stories. Such depth of personal and then shared analytics is often difficult to achieve in more traditional data collection methods. For example, survey methods are typically formulaic; providing a selection of answers to questions, rather than allowing the participant to self-describe, self-identify and self-prioritize important and complex historical aspects of their past. While in-depth interviews can provide the opportunity to reveal nuances of participant day-to-day experiences, they often do not require pre-preparation and an intense level of personal analysis prior to the co-creation of data. An unexpected benefit of this technique was the extent to which the storied use of photographs encouraged participants to identify new issues to discuss and foreground aspects of their lives they were proud of, further generating an awareness of their personal agency. However, the difficulties of using this method were also evident where people were less comfortable with taking photographs or felt inhibited or anxious about photographing their surroundings. In these instances, the researchers offered to accompany participants and shoot the actual photographs under the participants instructions. Careful attention to ethical issues was also necessary, and participants were informed about the problematics of taking photographs of people when this might constitute an invasion of privacy, and of ways to gain verbal consent. When existing photographs were used showing people or family scenes, then ensuring participants had gained the permission of others in the photo was emphasised. Knowing how the photographs would be used in the context of the research was also an important part of the photovoice negotiation process. These issues, encountered whilst using this photovoice method, paralleled those encountered by Mountian et al (2011) in their use of the experience sampling method to investigate wellbeing in the workplace.

## <2> Facilitating knowledge co-creation, ideas exchange and actions for change

Deliberative dialogue is a method aimed at generating thoughtful discussion, unique from other forms of public discourse techniques such as debating, negotiating, ideas mapping, and generating consensus (Kingston, 2005). This method provided an opportunity for concurrently generating and analysing data, engaging participants and synthesizing evidence with the end goal of establishing a set of actionable items (Plamondon, Bottorff, & Cole, 2015). Deliberative dialogue workshops enabled a shared platform for building management, developers, local service providers and representatives from the municipal government to exchange diverse perspectives toward potential solutions for creating socially engaging spaces in the new building (Canham et al, In press). While the process of deliberative dialogue was immensely helpful in focusing different stakeholders on the key issues at hand and potential solutions, difficulties were experienced in terms of supporting them to transcend the boundaries of their different knowledge bases as well as levels and types of expertise. Initially, some stakeholders were perceived as more knowledgeable or powerful than others which meant some deferred to others or expected direction in what to think from them. With careful facilitation, active listening, re-iteration of which expertise participants held and reinforcement that all perspectives were equally valued, a more trusting and open attitude developed where constructive challenges were welcomed and important agreements made. In this way, discussions generated directions for effective use of design features to enhance social connectedness between tenants. The discussions also helped stakeholders to design features, shared community spaces and social programming to enhance independent living for older adults in the new building. Key discussion topics and quotes exemplifying deliberative dialogue data are highlighted in Table 4.3.

<Insert Table 4.3 around here>

<Table caption = **Table 4.3:** Key discussion topics and associated quotes from the deliberative dialogue sessions.>

The use of deliberative dialogue promoted community resilience as several community groups came together to co-create ideas and actionable solutions using community assets to help residents to overcome the disruptive relocation change. Unlike traditional focus groups, we argue that deliberative dialogue sessions provided the opportunity for local stakeholders to view themselves as contributors and decision-makers in the community. They were able to develop shared visions at the outset and confirm appropriate actions and changes at the individual, group and community level. For instance, participants worked with researchers to generate ideas and future directions for developing supportive home environments. They focused on the effective use of shared amenity spaces; identified and mobilized local resources and partnerships; brought in tenant-specific programming; and informed tenants of local resources (Canham et al, In press). Participants who attended the deliberative dialogue sessions were also invited to attend subsequent participatory mapping workshops with tenants.

Participatory mapping is a research process that provides the opportunity to create a visible display of people, places and experiences that make up a community through map-making

(Corbett, 2009). Stemming from Participatory Rural Appraisal (developed in the 1980s to further understanding of rural life), it is part of 'a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions to plan and act' (Chambers, 1994, p.953). Established as a collaborative approach for generating understandings of locations and sense-of-place (Fang et al, 2016), participatory mapping is grounded in local knowledge with resulting spatial solutions co-created with stakeholders. Resultant maps are subsequently owned by local people (Chambers, 1994). As such, the method begins with the knowledge that community members hold, enabling them to take charge of the narration of the places that are meaningful to them.

To further understand older adults' sense-of-place (generated via storytelling and photovoice methods), and the necessary actions and changes required to rebuild the community for older adults (acquired through deliberative dialogue), we conducted a series of co-created mapping exercises (see Figure 4.4). Older adults and service providers were invited to four participatory mapping workshops. During the workshops participants identified locally available services and resources and pinpointed service and resource gaps on a large aerial map depicting the housing development and surrounding area. Other materials were made available to annotate the map and identify opportunities and barriers within the local community to age-in-place.

The use of maps themselves are reflective of, and productive of, power and mapping practices can reinforce those dynamics (Wood, 2010). Once again, mediating the established power hierarchies was necessary between the groups to ensure older adults were able to situate and position their own knowledge in relation to the map. Even amongst the community there were diverse perspectives and experiences and common agreement was sometimes difficult to achieve. In this respect the maps were neither neutral nor unproblematic with respect to positionality, and partiality of knowledge from different sections of the community. The map itself can exert a form of power, e.g. in assuming that space is fixed and invariable rather than fluid and contested. This it might be wise to begin with the premise that maps are rooted in and essential to power and knowledge (Harley, 1989).

Those people much more comfortable with maps were initially more involved than those self-identifying as not able to navigate the community using maps. Community mapping was anathema to many and top-down aerial maps were not necessarily commensurate with how older adults constructed their understandings of community at a street level. As a new type of exercise for many, the dynamics of mapping took much facilitation to ensure that collective understandings of place emerged. Sitting at tables restricted people from reaching the parts of the map they were concerned about. Once the decision was made to stand and walk around the room was taken, more people got involved in pointing out aspects of their community to share and discuss. This created small group situations who talked together and then collectively joined the mapping process.

<Figure 4.4 here>

<Figure caption = **Figure 4.4:** Photograph of the set-up for the participatory mapping workshop.>

A key methodological variation from traditional participatory rural appraisals was the integration of community ‘walk-alongs’ in the research process. Established as the ‘go-along’ method (Carpiano, 2009; Garcia, Eisenberg, Frerich, Lechner, & Lust, 2012), it is a form of qualitative interviewing often conducted while walking with the research participant (Kusenbach, 2003). Community ‘walk-alongs’ were used to further explore neighbourhood contexts, enabling older adult participants to adopt the role of the expert, highlighting in real time (as demonstrated in Figure 4.5) meaningful places, spaces and activities in their local environment (Fang et al, 2016).

<Figure 4.5 here>

<Figure caption = **Figure 4.5:** Photograph depicting the community walk-along with older adult participants.>

Community ‘walk-alongs’ were a crucial component in this study (Fang et al, 2016). The ability to visualise existing community assets helped older adult tenants realise additional types of programs and activities (see Table 4.4) they could have taking place in the new building, alongside those already in existence in the neighbourhood. The joint process of walking and talking tends to mimic more friendship relationships, tending to minimise to some extent the research-participant power dynamics by placing participants in control of the walk. The movement of walking also tended to provide a natural rhythm to the data collection process whereby silences (sometimes experienced as uncomfortable in focus groups or interviews) were no longer problematic but experienced as more companionable. The ‘walk-along’ process revealed participants’ desires, hopes and expectations for their new community by facing them with the difficulties or deficiencies in the current surroundings. However, the process was difficult to track as some people walked more quickly than others, splitting the group and meaning that some conversations were lost to the data collection process. Additionally, it was, at times, difficult to establish a walking route with different residents wanting to show different aspects of their community. Care was also needed to address the needs of less mobile participants, ensuring adequate resting places were on hand. In retrospect, the research team needed to scout out the area, finding resting places and understanding the topographical features of the environment to enable the walk along to progress more smoothly.

<Insert Table 4.4 around here>

<Table caption = **Table 4.4:** Activities, services and other social and physical features voiced by seniors to enhance ageing in place.>

Earlier research suggested participatory mapping as a useful tool to encourage collaboration as well as dialogue and relationship building among participants (Amsden & VanWynsberghe, 2005). Participatory mapping both in terms of workshops with actual maps and ‘walk-alongs’ enabled the researchers to access older adults’ attitudes and knowledge. This provided further understandings of the types of relationships participants have with their community and surrounding environment, and the types of programs and activities they wanted (Carpiano,

2009). Community 'walk-alongs' also facilitated older adults' social participation by creating a networking space for engaging with service providers and other older adults. Participant evaluations identified these strengths of this method. Evaluation feedback emphasised the value of having opportunities to network with others who they could engage with after the workshop to establish 'in-house' activities, programs and services. However, the difficulties of 'walk-alongs' were also identified by participants, as well as researchers frustrated by knowing some potentially important information had been lost.

In summary, the multiple methods applied in this study provided older adults, community partners and local stakeholders various opportunities to contribute to decision-making and enabled them to articulate their views on the redevelopment process. This helped redirect focus away from the purely physical aspects of the built environment to include non-physical, psychosocial support for residents.

### **Conclusions: Outcomes and Limitations**

As part of the 'Place-making with Seniors' housing redevelopment project, a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach was applied, to understand sense-of-place of older adults through multiple vantage points. A variety of qualitative methods were used (see Table 4.1), some of which are inherently creative in nature (e.g., storytelling, photovoice and mapping exercises). Knowledge and solutions were co-created with local stakeholders who had a vested interest in the health and wellbeing of older adults. This resulted in a number of positive outcomes which revealed how community resilience and empowerment, articulated through their voices within the action research project, transformed the redevelopment in ways which were beneficial for older adults. As such, and in recognition of community requirements and aspirations, a number of changes were implemented to create a better living environment for older tenants. These included the establishment of a social committee which was led and organised by tenants living in the building; several annual cultural and social events, which were funded by building management; also, a number of on-going, in-house, age-friendly activities and strategies were established to generate income to fund equipment and events (e.g., hosting international tours for architects and designers from Mainland China, bake sales, and grant submissions).

In terms of study limitations, participatory methods are resource intensive and time consuming, particularly since the research is embedded within the community. Gaining access to community members requires dedicated time to build partnerships, demonstrate accountability and develop trust. This drawback can lead to small recruitment numbers and a lack of perspectives from harder to reach people. Also, if participants are not involved in all stages of the project, involvement can seem tokenistic. An important step towards gaining access to the community and establishing trust was through employing researchers fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and English who could communicate with participants in their first language.

As participatory methods are firmly grounded in principles of empowerment, this methodological strength superseded its limitations. As such, we highly recommend CBPR for

future place research especially for its ability to capitalise on and enhance community resilience through joint approaches to decision-making by drawing on knowledge and expertise from a full range of professional and community groups. In order to avoid some of the challenges described throughout the chapter we suggest establishing partnership building and developing relationships with stakeholders before the start of the project (ideally, during the proposal development phase). Frequent meetings with partners are needed to enable active and open communication. In order to access harder to reach participants it is recommended that researchers meet participants at their homes. When recruiting participants, information sheets with photos of people involved in the project helps participants to know what to expect and makes them feel less intimidated. Importantly, all stakeholders need to be included in all aspects of the research to avoid tokenistic engagement. Finally, as researchers, we need to aware and reflect upon the power dynamics that are inherent in participatory research and the need to document how methods reinforce and reproduce power, not only through the different stakeholders involved in the research, but in how we use research materials such as maps and ask people to document their experiences in relation to place.



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## Tables

**Table 4.1:** Purpose and use implications of the five qualitative methods selected for this CBPR study.

Method	Population(s)	Key Characteristics	Purpose	Use Implication(s)
<i>In-depth Interviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older adults transitioning into affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrative method; open-ended questions; semi-structured; led by researcher to seek understanding and interpretation; often audio-recorded or video-recorded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applied as a 'discovery-oriented' approach to obtain rich background stories of tenants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elicited depth of contextual information from relatively few participants</li> </ul>
<i>Storytelling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older adults transitioning into affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrative method; un-structured; led by participant to reveal and inspire understandings about a particular topic or phenomenon in relation to self while simultaneously providing important, in-depth information to the researcher; often audio-recorded or video-recorded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To acquire richer and more complex understandings triggering memories that revealed their emotional ties to place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated richer contextual information from relatively few participants than in-depth interviews, whilst simultaneously enabling the participant to reveal understandings of self</li> </ul>
<i>Deliberative Dialogue</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders with vested interest in the redevelopment project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves multiple stakeholder participants; shared platform; informal; encourages idea exchange; requires the generation of actionable tasks at the end of the dialogue session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To facilitate co-creation of solutions through the exchange of diverse perspectives from multiple stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabled multiple stakeholders to work together with researchers to generate ideas and future directions for developing supportive home environments for older adults</li> </ul>
<i>Photovoice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older adults transitioning into affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual method; participant-led; informal; uses photography to explore personal experiences of a particular phenomenon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To empower older adults to share stories of place through a creative outlet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabled older adults to capture or direct the taking of photographic images to illustrate their everyday experiences</li> </ul>
<i>Participatory Mapping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older adults transitioning into affordable housing and stakeholders with vested interest in the redevelopment project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual method; multiple stakeholders; participant-led; map-making; community 'walk-alongs'; informal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify locally available services and resources and pinpoint service and resource gaps through community 'walk-alongs' and mapping exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabled the researchers to access older people's attitudes and their expert knowledge, to understand the types of relationships participants had with their community and created networking space for engagement and generating shared solutions</li> </ul>

**Table 4.2:** Example of data analysis matrix of categories through a storytelling session with an older adult participant.

TIME POINT (1): MAINLAND CHINA				
Identity	Positionality	Opportunities	Oppression	Places
Chinese	Having work	Education	Place restrictions	School
Student	Married		Cultural revolution	
	Living with partner			
	Wealthy in-laws			
TIME POINT (2): HONG KONG				
Identity	Positionality	Opportunities	Oppression	Places
Widower	Married	None identified	Overcrowded	Apartment
Chinese			Uncomfortable weather	City
Housewife			Oppressive political culture	
Mother			Living in small spaces	
TIME POINT (3): CANADA				
Identity	Positionality	Opportunities	Oppression	Places
Hospitable	Living alone	Establishing ownership	Being unwell	New building
Consumer	Has a social support network	Place affordance	Reliance on others	Long-term care home
Unwasteful	Poor	Higher powers	Getting old	Hospital
Prudent	Middle class	Self-care	Lack of or restricted place agency	Supermarket
Indonesian	Debilitated	Convenience	Fear and shame of being burdensome	Chinatown (area of the city)
Immigrant		Social welfare system	Moving homes	Church
Older person		Place freedom	Transient places	
Carer		Having more space	Lack of mobility	
Grandparent		Engaging with cultures different than your own	Stolen or wasted time	
Chinese		Appreciating other cultural norms	Self-care	
Canadian citizen		Living in a democratic society	Experiencing urban development	
Dual national identities			Social and cultural shift	
Ordinary or common			Carer responsibilities	
Not a gossip			Limited employment opportunities	
Quiet			Agentic limitations by circumstance	
Reader			Place restrictions	
Mother			Ageism	
			Language barrier	
			Negative experiences with different cultural groups	
			Inappropriate window blinds let in too much light	
			Enduring cigarette smoke	
			Lack of knowledge and understanding of technology	

**Table 4.3:** Key discussion topics and associated quotes from the deliberative dialogue sessions.

Discussion Topics	Quotes
<i>Design features to enhance social connectedness with neighbours</i>	"They're all connected, the two towers are connected with this hallway with centralized hobby room, et cetera, the games room. The idea was, is that we don't want the tenants of one tower to feel that that is their tower, and Tower 2 is not part of us or vice versa. We wanted them to feel like they can flow easily between one tower and the other. That is basically the concept of the amenities that we have."
<i>Design features to enhance independent living</i>	"And we have dedicated space in both buildings for power scooters. There's plug-ins in them, and also room in them for bicycle parking. So we're trying to encourage these other alternative means of moving around the community."
<i>Community spaces</i>	"We made every attempt we could to promote a more healthy social atmosphere. So we started right with the lobby area. It's going to be a busy place... what we did was, we have the main entrance and then we have a little seating, reading area, waiting area off the side, that kind of allows [tenants] to sit down there comfortably. It's got a little electric fireplace in it. It has a little ambience."
<i>Social programming in the new building</i>	"That is one of the things...is to find people that want to come in and put on these programs for our tenants. And there is the key: it is limited to our tenants. We are not trying to service an outside community. And if our tenants want something that we haven't provided, there is the senior's centre just down the street...or availability all within a close proximity. So, what we are trying to do is to find those programs that our tenants want, that we can attract somebody to come and put those programs on, whether it's dancing, yoga, bingo, or whatever."



**Table 4.4:** Activities, services and other social and physical features voiced by seniors to enhance ageing in place.

Activities	Services/Classes	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tai Chi</li> <li>• Barbeques (twice per year)</li> <li>• Dancing</li> <li>• Mah Jong</li> <li>• Knitting</li> <li>• Bible study</li> <li>• Book club</li> <li>• Life history learning lessons about residents</li> <li>• Ladies coffee hour</li> <li>• Learn to paint</li> <li>• Calligraphy</li> <li>• Glee Club singing</li> <li>• Holiday / birthday parties / potlucks</li> <li>• Sculpturing</li> <li>• Making frames</li> <li>• Scrabble</li> <li>• Theatre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language classes (e.g. English, Mandarin, Spanish)</li> <li>• Assistance with tax returns</li> <li>• Family practitioner</li> <li>• Grocery store / help with groceries</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing seminars</li> <li>• Fire safety seminars</li> <li>• Health checks and monitoring</li> <li>• Balance classes</li> <li>• Art classes</li> <li>• Music classes</li> <li>• Manicures</li> <li>• Pedicures</li> <li>• Yoga classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally-sensitive emergency evacuation plan</li> <li>• Pedestrian crosswalk needed on the main street outside the building</li> <li>• Age-friendly exercise equipment</li> <li>• Reduced membership fee at the seniors centre</li> <li>• Air conditioning in games / hobbies room</li> <li>• Replacing blinds</li> <li>• More ping-pong tables</li> <li>• Peer-to-peer training on 'living in the condo'</li> </ul>